Summary of the Invention

To address the shortcomings of previous document storage procedures and filing systems, the applicants of the present invention devised an operating system which, rather than relying on application programs to set a common folder for default document storage, provides a common default folder for all application programs using the operating system. Moreover, for convenient access to the common default folder, some forms of the operating system include a graphical user interface which provides one-button access to the default folder at the highest level of the interface, eliminating the need for users to search through a hierarchical list of folders for the default folder. Additionally, other versions of the operating system include a service that not only provides a list of most recently used documents but also provides one-button access to the common default folder from that list.

In the context of a computer system, the invention concerns document-management interactions among an operating system, one or more application programs, and a user interface which allows users to view and enter data into the computer system. More particularly, the operating system takes advantage of the normal interactions with application programs during access to basic File Open and File Save functions to present a common default storage folder. In one particular embodiment of the present invention, the default storage folder is called "My Documents" and is presented to the application programs in their File Open or File Save dialog boxes. Additionally, the operating system promotes further use of the default documents folder at other file-access points in its graphical user interface (e.g., a desktop icon or a link in the most recently used documents list).

Additional benefits are realized by using a default documents folder in accordance with the present invention; for example, network administrators are now able to control the location of the default document storage folder for users throughout their network.

Summary of the Principal References Cited

The Windows95 Reference

The Windows95 reference provides a detailed overview of the Windows '95 operating system. Included in the Windows '95 operating system and in the Windows95 reference are teachings of file operation dialog boxes, such as File Save and File Save As dialog boxes.

-2-

Additionally included is a teaching of a documents folder providing a list of links to recently used documents. However, there is no teaching in Windows95 of file operation dialog boxes that present a default documents folder. In particular, there is no teaching in Windows95 of file operation dialog boxes that present a default documents folder only after a number of determination steps. Additionally, while the most recently used documents list does list most recently used documents, there is no mechanism in Windows95 for including a link to a default documents folder on the most recently used documents list. Accordingly, it is clear that Windows95 neither teaches nor suggests a default documents folder or mechanisms for accessing such a default document folder.

The Lisle et al. Reference

Lisle et al. provides a description of a file operations interface that includes "drawers" having containment settings which specify how the interface will collect and filter files to produce representations for display in the drawer. For example:

> After querying the file system for all objects matching the query is identified as the contents of the logical container. Subsequently, whenever the logical container displays its contents, CPU 110 generates views, or representations, for each file matching the containment settings. (Column 11, lines 33-38.)

As can be seen from the above excerpt, Lisle et al. teaches an overlay program on top of a file system for creating representations of files meeting particular criteria and displaying them in a separate program. Nowhere in Lisle et al. is there a teaching of file operation dialog boxes, and in particular, there is no teaching or suggestion of file operation dialog boxes that present a default folder for applications in an operating system. While Lisle et al. does teach creating drawers of documents, a closer reading of Lisle et al. makes it abundantly clear that Lisle et al. is merely creating drawers of representations of documents and not drawers of the documents themselves. For example, looking at Column 11, lines 39-49, it is clear that the drawers of Lisle et al. merely present representations and do not affect the documents in the file storage system.

This is made even clearer when Lisle et al. is discussing the Windows 95 operating system in the Background of the Invention, in which Lisle states that Windows 95 "still requires

-3-